

North Carolina - 8th District

8 W.G. "Bill" Hefner (D)

Of Concord — Elected 1974

Born: April 11, 1930, Elora, Tenn.

Education: High school graduate.

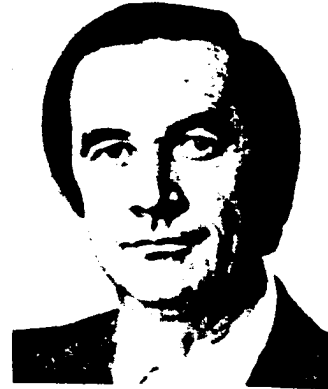
Occupation: Broadcasting executive.

Family: Wife, Nancy Hill; two children.

Religion: Baptist

Political Career: No previous office.

Capitol Office: 2161 Rayburn Bldg. 20515; 225-3715.



In Washington: Relatively inconspicuous on the floor, like most of his delegation, Hefner has emerged in recent years as one of the more important national Democratic loyalists from the South.

In 1979 he was instrumental in rounding up a bloc of more than 50 Southerners willing to endorse Jimmy Carter's renomination, on the grounds that Carter was the best option for any conservative who wanted to stay a Democrat.

In 1981 House leaders placed him on the Budget Committee, and he declared himself early for the budget drafted by House Democratic leaders, insisting that the massive tax cut in President Reagan's alternative was unwise. When Budget Chairman James R. Jones decided the Democratic budget needed more defense money in order to attract a majority on the floor, Hefner offered the amendment that was designed to fill that need: an extra \$6.7 billion for defense in fiscal 1982.

The amendment brought Hefner public attention that was unusual for him, but it also advertised his anti-Reagan vote at a time when Democrats from all over the South were drawing intense lobbying pressure from administration forces. Hefner's defense amendment, accepted without controversy, helped bring Jones five of the seven votes from North Carolina on the ultimate budget decision. But 46 of the 78 Southern Democrats went the other way, including three Budget Committee members who had gone along with Jones and Hefner at earlier stages.

In a debate highly charged with partisan fervor, Hefner's amendment struck some conservative Republicans as a particularly egregious partisan ploy. GOP Rep. Bobbi Fiedler of California, noting that Hefner missed a crucial Budget Committee meeting when he could have offered his amendment, questioned his commitment to a stronger defense. Majority Leader Jim Wright of Texas came to Hefner's

defense, and warned the Republicans not to impugn a member's motives.

The budget episode meant a change in Hefner's role as a member of the Democratic Forum, the organization of more than 40 conservative House Democrats who keep close contacts with the Reagan administration. Hefner was a charter member of that group, arguing that it could help move the party to the right. But others in the forum felt he was a national Democrat pretending to be more conservative than he really was — a sort of "mole" among the Boll Weevils. His budget voting reinforced that perception. He was also the only forum member to serve as a delegate at the party's national midterm conference in 1982.

Hefner's leadership connections have brought him excellent committee positions, not only on Budget but on Appropriations, allowing him to serve as a kind of ambassador between the two panels. He is also on the Steering and Policy Committee, which makes assignments for all the House Democrats.

He began lobbying for a place on Appropriations early in his career and finally made it in the summer of 1980, when the Steering and Policy Committee was split 12-12 over two other nominees. Hefner asked that his name be offered as a compromise, and was chosen.

Since then, Hefner has become a military specialist on Appropriations, serving not only on the Defense Subcommittee but on Military Construction. He took over as chairman of the Military Construction panel at the start of the 98th Congress.

On defense, he votes more like his southern colleagues than like his party leaders. Although he opposed production of the MX missile in committee, he voted for the production of nerve gas and against the 1982 nuclear freeze resolution, and he generally supports high lev-

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North Carolina 8

Politics in the 8th is delineated by geography. The mountain counties in the northern part of the district and the textile towns in the center lean Republican; both areas voted for Ronald Reagan in 1980. The farm counties in the southern part of the 8th prefer Democrats; they chose Jimmy Carter over Reagan.

The Democratic stronghold in the district is Hoke County, a rural area where the 44 percent black population combines with a significant American Indian minority to deliver an overwhelming Democratic vote. Hefner reaped the Democratic strength here in 1982, winning 84 percent of the Hoke County vote. Hoke makes up just 4 percent of the district population, however.

North of Hoke is the part of Moore County in the 8th, including affluent, Republican-voting resort communities such as Southern Pines, Pinehurst and Whispering Pines. In 1982 Moore continued its Republican ways; Hefner failed to carry the Moore County part of the 8th, winning just 46 percent.

South Central — Kannapolis; Salisbury

The other two counties Hefner lost in 1982, Davie and Yadkin, are in the district's northern reaches. This is strong GOP territory; both Davie and Yadkin have supported Republican candidates in recent presidential and U.S. Senate races. In the 1980 gubernatorial contest, both counties gave a majority to Republican nominee I. Beverly Lake, who managed to win just 37 percent of the vote statewide.

In the center of the district, small cities and towns such as Kannapolis, Salisbury and Concord manufacture textiles and textile machinery. Kannapolis is the district's largest population center, with 34,564 residents. Founded by Cannon Mills, the textile manufacturer, Kannapolis has never incorporated; many of the houses there still are owned by the company.

Population: 535,526. White 420,470 (79%), Black 107,482 (20%), American Indian, Eskimo and Aleut 6,031 (1%). Spanish origin 3,730 (1%). 18 and over 381,299 (71%), 65 and over 62,412 (12%). Median age: 31.

els of defense spending.

Before moving to Appropriations, Hefner spent a term on the Commerce Committee and a term on Public Works, where he was closely involved in the arguments over President Carter's proposals to deregulate the airline industry. He cast an initial vote to weaken the deregulation bill at Public Works, then backed a compromise that eventually helped the bill to be enacted.

At Home: Hefner has settled into a pattern of winning re-election with a percentage in the high 50s. In most years, that is about what a Democrat should expect in the 8th, which has significant Republican strength.

Running for Congress in 1974 against the backdrop of Watergate, Hefner pledged to revive "Christian morality" in government and spiced his political speeches with renditions of his favorite hymns.

That might be seen as an incautious mixture of church and state in some parts of the country, but not in the Bible-belt 8th District. Hefner's blend of inspiration, entertainment and politicking helped him soundly defeat Republican Rep. Earl B. Ruth.

Early in 1974, Ruth was not thought to be in any great danger. First elected in 1968, he had gained strength in two subsequent elections, winning more than 60 percent in 1972.

But Hefner was an exceptional candidate. As a promoter and singer of gospel music in the Carolinas and Virginia, he had made many local and statewide television appearances. He started the campaign with excellent name recognition and gradually won back thousands of conservative Democrats who had drifted toward Ruth. Hefner unseated the Republican with 57 percent of the vote.

Hefner jumped to 66 percent in 1976, a strong Democratic year in North Carolina, then received 59 percent in both 1978 and 1980. The GOP candidate in 1982 was Harris Blake, a former member of the Moore County Board of Education. Blake, who was guided by Sen. Jesse Helms' Congressional Club, was one of the few Republicans in 1982 who had some success blaming unemployment on his Democratic foe.

Blake said Hefner contributed to textile factory shutdowns in the 8th because he voted for most-favored-nation trading status for the

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People's Republic of China. According to Blake, Hefner should have opposed most-favored status for China to protect U.S. textile companies, who have trouble competing with Chinese textiles produced by low-wage workers.

Hefner blamed joblessness on GOP economic policy, and portrayed himself as a moderate Democrat who would continue to protect the elderly and the poor from Republican budget cutting.

Democratic Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. came

into the 8th to urge Democratic solidarity against the Helms-sponsored Blake candidacy.

Hefner's showing in the northern and central part of the district was unimpressive; he lost two counties and was held to 55 percent or less in three others. Blake also won Moore County, on the eastern edge of the 8th. But Hefner took overwhelming margins in five smaller counties in the southern, traditionally Democratic part of the district, and he finished with 57 percent overall.

Committees

Appropriations (26th of 36 Democrats)
Military Construction, (chairman); Defense.

Budget (9th of 20 Democrats)
Task Forces: Budget Process; Education and Employment; Entitlements, Uncontrollables and Indexing.

Elections**1982 General**

W.G. "Bill" Hefner (D)	71,691	(57%)
Harris Blake (R)	52,417	(42%)

1982 Primary

W.G. "Bill" Hefner (D)	44,860	(80%)
James Ellison (D)	11,394	(20%)

1980 General

Bill Hefner (D)	95,013	(59%)
Larry Harris (R)	67,317	(42%)

Previous Winning Percentages: 1978 (59%) 1976 (66%)
1974 (57%)

District Vote For President

1980		1976	
D	76,466 (46%)	D	86,180 (55%)
R	88,672 (52%)	R	68,522 (44%)
I	3,519 (2%)		

Campaign Finance

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs		Expenditures
1982				
Hefner (D)	\$229,248	\$115,054 (50%)		\$249,491
Blake (R)	\$241,137	\$41,068 (17%)		\$236,746
1980				
Hefner (D)	\$111,117	\$63,455 (57%)		\$79,281
Harris (R)	\$18,534	0		\$18,530

Voting Studies

Year	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
	S	O	S	O	S	O
1982	47	48	57	39†	87	10
1981	53	41	57	33	76	23
1980	54	32	58	32†	74	14
1979	69	26	68	28	69	28
1978	56	44	51	47	77	19
1977	62	34	55	41	68	26
1976	43	45	42	48	80	11
1975	27	72	52	42	70	24

S = Support O = Opposition

†Not eligible for all recorded votes.

Key Votes

Reagan budget proposal (1981)	N
Legal services reauthorization (1981)	Y
Disapprove sale of AWACs planes to Saudi Arabia (1981)	Y
Index income taxes (1981)	N
Subsidize home mortgage rates (1982)	Y
Amend Constitution to require balanced budget (1982)	Y
Delete MX funding (1982)	?
Retain existing cap on congressional salaries (1982)	Y
Adopt nuclear freeze (1983)	Y

Interest Group Ratings

Year	ADA	ACA	AFL-CIO	CCUS
1982	20	50	50	64
1981	35	48	79	31
1980	22	36	50	81
1979	42	36	47	47
1978	25	63	20	67
1977	35	40	43	65
1976	15	56	52	57
1975	32	58	48	41